

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following list of claims replaces all prior versions and lists of claims:

Claims 1-26 (canceled)

Claim 27 (Currently amended): A composition comprising an isolated polynucleotide which encodes an hepatitis C virus (HCV) proteolytic polypeptide, wherein said polypeptide ~~comprises~~ consists essentially of an HCV NS3 domain protease or an HCV NS3 domain protease active truncation analog.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease comprises the sequence of SEQ ID No: 1.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease comprises the sequence of SEQ ID No: 63.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease comprises the sequence of SEQ ID No: 64.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease comprises the sequence of SEQ ID No: 65.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): A composition comprising an isolated polynucleotide which encodes an hepatitis C virus (HCV) proteolytic polypeptide, wherein said polypeptide comprises a fusion protein comprising a fusion partner fused to a HCV NS3 domain protease or to an active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 32 wherein said fusion partner comprises human superoxide dismutase.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 32 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 63.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 32 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 64.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 32 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or active truncation analog has a partial internal amino acid sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 65.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): An expression vector for producing an HCV proteolytic polypeptide in a host cell, wherein said vector comprises a polynucleotide encoding said HCV proteolytic polypeptide comprises an HCV NS3 domain protease or an active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog; transcriptional and translational regulatory sequences functional in said host cell operably linked to said polynucleotide; and a selectable marker.

Claim 38 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 37 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease comprises SEQ ID No: 1.

Claim 39 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 37 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or HCV NS3 domain protease active truncation analog has an internal sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 63.

Claim 40 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 37 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or HCV NS3 domain protease active truncation analog has an internal sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 64.

Claim 41 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 37 wherein said HCV NS3 domain protease or HCV NS3 domain protease active truncation analog has an internal sequence comprising SEQ ID No: 65.

Claim 42 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 37 wherein said nucleotide further comprises a sequence encoding a fusion partner, linked to said HCV NS3 domain protease or said active HCV NS3 domain protease truncation analog to form a fusion protein upon expression.

Claim 43 (Previously Presented): The expression vector of claim 42 wherein said fusion partner is human superoxide dismutase.

Claim 44 (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 27 wherein said isolated polynucleotide encodes only an HCV NS3 domain protease or an HCV NS3 domain protease active truncation analog.